

Middle School Parents[®]

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Region 10 Education Service Center is proud to provide this service for you!

still make the difference!



Focus on positive discipline for your middle schooler this summer

By middle school, your child will have learned to tune out negative discipline, such as yelling. And you have probably realized that it doesn't work anyway.

This summer, when you may see more of your child, use positive discipline whenever possible. In return, you may see a positive change in your child by summer's end.

Here's how to get started:

- **Be generally pleasant** to your child, even if she is not! Smile. Show affection—hug her if she is comfortable with it, pat her arm or shoulder if not.
- **Encourage your child** to learn a new skill this summer. Cooking a meal is a great one to try. Thank her for doing it and mention that it helps the family.

- **Notice what your child** does right and compliment her.
- **Say *thank you*** when your child does something for you or the family. Say *please* when you ask her to do something.
- **Trust your child.** If your child has been generally trustworthy, give her the benefit of the doubt. Believe what she says. Give her a new freedom if she has shown responsibility.
- **Ask your child for a lesson.** There are probably things your child knows how to do better than you, especially when it comes to technology. Also ask her opinions on issues that matter to the family.

Source: Julia G. Thompson, *Discipline Survival Kit for the Secondary Teacher*, ISBN: 0-87628-434-9 (Jossey-Bass, a Wiley imprint, 1-800-956-7739, www.wiley.com).

Bring reading materials with you everywhere



Want to do your child a wonderful favor? Push the message that reading is one of the best ways to spend any

moment of free time.

Your child can read when he is:

- **Waiting in line** with you at the market.
- **Waiting at the doctor's office.**
- **Waiting for the school bus.**
- **Riding in the car.**

Encourage your child to always have some reading material with him. Keep it in the car, in his backpack, in his coat. Don't worry if it's a book, a magazine or part of the newspaper—even the comics.

Take it a step further by going to the library, checking out some books you think he'd like and keeping them in the car for him.

Boys, especially, need encouragement to read. They tend to like reading material about sports, the outdoors, collecting and hobbies. They also like science fiction, mystery, adventure and fantasy.

Be sure to have reading material for yourself, too. Your example is a powerful motivator.

Source: Vicki Poretta and Marian Edelman Borden, *Mom's Guide to Raising a Good Student* (Alpha Books, 212-366-2000, www.alphabooks.com).

Try a little humor to help you deal with annoying behaviors



No, you shouldn't laugh off all of your preteen's annoying behaviors. But it's vital to find a few chuckles where you can.

Research shows that the average American breaks out in giggles roughly 15 times each day in order to maintain good mental and physical health. Far from being simple fun and games, though, humor can actually:

- **Help you and your preteen deal with conflict.**

- **Improve your mood.**
- **Ward off depression.**
- **Make it easier** to discuss sticky topics like discipline or rules. Granted, you don't want to make jokes when your preteen does something seriously wrong. But to save your sanity during these next few years of eye-rolling and attitude? A little laugh certainly couldn't hurt!

Source: Ronald L. Pitzer, "A Parent's Guide to Teens: The Growing Season Book," University of Minnesota Extension, www.extension.umn.edu/distribution/familydevelopment/components/DE7776g.html.

Studies show that too much TV can lead to learning problems



As the parent of a middle schooler, you should be aware that too much TV may harm your preteen. Researchers agree that

preteens should watch no more than two hours of television a day. And with summer right around the corner, now is a great time to set limits on screen time.

Here are specifics from a recent study, published in a medical journal about child and teen health. The doctors who published the study researched a group of teens for many years. The study began when the teens were 14 and ended when they were adults in their mid-30s.

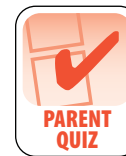
The doctors found that:

- **Teens who watched TV** for three hours or more each day were more likely to develop learning and attention problems.
- **Teen problems** included not doing homework, not liking school, being bored in school and getting poor grades.
- **Video games** have a similar effect as TV.

- **Some teens dropped out** of high school. Others finished but did not go on to other education. This was not true of every teen in the study.
- **It didn't matter** whether the teens grew up in rich, poor or middle-class families. Watching a lot of TV put teens from all of these types of families at risk for learning and attention problems.

Source: Jeffrey G. Johnson, Ph.D. and others, "Extensive Television Viewing and the Development of Attention and Learning Difficulties During Adolescence," *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine*, <http://archpedi.ama-assn.org/cgi/content/full/161/5/480>.

Are you and your preteen ready for a great summer?



Your child has worked hard all year and summer freedom is finally on the horizon. But how much freedom? Take this quiz

to see if you and your child have worked out a plan for a safe, productive and happy summer. Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below:

1. **Have you arranged** for your child's summer supervision? Will an adult know where he is and what he is doing at all times?
2. **Have you and your child** agreed on a set of rules he will follow this summer? Example: He is never to be on the street after dark.
3. **Have you established** learning goals for the summer? Example: He will read every day for at least 30 minutes.
4. **Do you have an exercise plan** for the summer? Your child can swim, ride a bicycle or go on walks.
5. **Will you spend time** with your child each day—sharing a meal, exercising, talking in the car as you run an errand?

How well are you doing?

Each *yes* answer means you and your child have a head start on a good summer. For each *no* answer, try that idea in the quiz.

Middle School **Parents** still make the difference!

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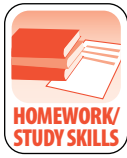
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Have an idea to share?

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Teach your child to focus on the ‘hard part’ of misspelled words



Kids get frustrated when they keep misspelling the same old words. Usually they misspell a word in only one place. They might add a letter. Or they forget one where it should be. They use an *e* for an *a*. Or they double a letter when it should be single.

These are simple mistakes. But once a student has a distorted image of a word, it sticks in his mind.

To get the right image, suggest your child:

- **Find the hard part** of the misspelled word.
- **Rewrite that word** correctly capitalizing the hard letters. For instance, *climB*, *frIEnd*, *boRRow* and *potatO*.
- **Write this capitalized version** of the word over and over.
- **Quit when he can see** the hard part of the word with his eyes shut.

Source: Eugene M. Schwartz, *How to Double Your Child's Grades in School*, ISBN: 0-941683-36-2 (Barnes & Noble, 1-800-843-2665, www.barnesandnoble.com).

Find age-appropriate volunteer opportunities for your preteen



More and more, middle schools require students to perform community service each semester. Why not have your child do some over the summer? Kids typically have less to do than during the school year. It's a great time to devote to helping others.

Here are some activities that are appropriate for your child's age. Discuss these with her (or get her suggestions) and choose one according to her interests and abilities.

Your preteen can:

- **Be a counselor-in-training.** She can help at a summer program for younger children.
- **Babysit for a family** she knows that really needs help with child care. Consider doing it for free.
- **Conduct a food drive.** She can ask neighbors, friends and family to donate canned food and deliver it to a shelter or food bank.
- **Record herself reading** popular children's books. Take the recordings to a children's hospital wing.

- **Do yard work** for a person who is elderly or has a disability. Your teenager can:
 - **Be a counselor** at a summer program for younger children.
 - **Be a mentor** for a younger child or a preteen.
 - **Tutor a child** in math or reading over the summer. Do it for free.
 - **Sign up to work** for a campaign, if she is interested in supporting any of the candidates in this fall's elections.
 - **Read to older people** at an assisted living center, or volunteer to go once a week and lead a game, such as bingo.

Source: Jenny Friedman, *The Busy Family's Guide to Volunteering*, ISBN: 1-58904-012-0 (Robins Lane Press, a division of Gryphon House, Inc., 1-800-638-0928, www.robinslanepress.com).

“Whether you think that you can, or that you can't, you are usually right.”

—Henry Ford

Q: My 13-year-old daughter is incredibly shy. She transferred to a new school four months ago and she is miserable. She says she just can't make new friends. She's doing well academically, but I'm very worried about her social development due to her shyness.

Questions & Answers

A: You are right to be concerned about your daughter, and there are many things you can do to help her:

- **Talk with your daughter's teachers.** They can help by allowing her to work in smaller groups or pairing her with friendly students for tasks.
- **Consult the counselor** at your daughter's school. Counselors are trained to help students having trouble making an adjustment to a new school.
- **Consider having** your daughter tutor younger students. This can boost her confidence and give her practice talking with others.
- **Encourage your daughter** to join a school organization. Working with others on a project or a team is a good way for her to make friends.
- **Help your daughter explore** ways to make friends outside of school. Perhaps she can join a scout troop or a youth group at your place of worship.
- **Get involved at the school** yourself. As you get to know the staff and other parents, you may find ways to help your daughter.

If, after trying several of these ideas, your daughter still has trouble connecting with others, it may be time to consult a professional.

—Holly Smith,
The Parent Institute

It Matters: Summer Learning

Encourage your preteen to write over the summer



It's important for your child to write over the summer. Summer writing should be purposeful yet fun.

Some quick and easy ways to keep your child in "writing shape" include:

- **Letters.** Encourage your child to correspond with a relative or friend. Email is okay, but instant messaging is a last choice. Encourage your child to write a paragraph, or at least a few complete sentences.
- **Lists and schedules.** Jotting down a shopping or to-do list may not improve your child's sentence structure. But it reinforces the important idea of writing for a purpose.
- **Journals.** Give your child a journal at the beginning of the summer. Ask her to write in it to record her thoughts, experiences and emotions.
- **Notes.** Leave regular notes for your child—at her place at the table, on her pillow, taped to the bathroom mirror. Ask her to write back to you.
- **Poetry, prose and lyrics.** Perhaps on a rainy day, ask your child to turn off the video games and try expressing herself through a poem or song. The idea of writing a song may be especially appealing to middle schoolers, for whom music is often important.

Source: Lynn Dean, "Keep your kids writing this summer," Partnership for Learning, www.partnershipforlearning.org/article.asp?ArticleID=91.

Reinforce your middle-schooler's money skills over the summer

Working with money is more than just a way for your child to get the latest video game. It's an important skill for practicing math and responsibility.

You can help your child reinforce money skills this summer if you:

- **Try an allowance.** If it's possible, give your child an allowance to cover his expenses. Tell him he won't get more until the next allowance time. This teaches budgeting skills.
- **Shop for the family.** Give your child a list and money. He will have to stay in budget and bring you back change.
- **Figuring amounts.** If you eat at a restaurant, have your child figure out the tip.



- **Working.** If your child baby-sits or mows lawns, require him to stick to a plan for how he will use the money.

Source: Marguerite C. Radench and Jeanne Shay Schumm, *How to Help Your Child With Homework*, ISBN: 1-57542-006-6 (Free Spirit Publishing, 1-800-735-7323, www.freespirit.com).

Help your child build memory skills with summer memories



Making memories now can lead to more efficient learning during the school year.

Remembering summer experiences can help your child build the working and long-term memory that is so important for school success.

Have your child:

- **Write.** Building memory is a great reason to encourage your child to keep a journal. Your child is more likely to remember what she writes down, and she will have a record to turn to if she wants to refresh her memory.

- **Keep up with the times.** Your child may have more time in the summer to read the newspaper or watch TV news. As current events go into her "memory bank," she may be able to associate them with concepts she learns at school.
- **Talk.** Your child will not be rushing off to do homework in the summer. Ask her to linger and share her daily experiences. Ask questions like, "What does that remind you of?"

Source: Drew and Cynthia Johnson, *Homework Heroes*, ISBN: 0-7432-2259-8 (Kaplan Publishing, a division of Simon & Schuster, 1-800-223-2336, www.kaplanpublishing.com).